

News Release

For Immediate Release

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SPELL SAYS FEDERAL FARM BILL WILL HELP MS

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Lester Spell Jr. says a farm relief bill now in Congress would be a big help for farmers in Mississippi hard hit by both drought and drought-related diseases earlier this year. While in Washington, D.C. last week, Spell outlined the severity of the situation and gave his suggestions as to what was needed.

Commissioner Spell says he hopes the bill will be approved soon. "Our agricultural community has been hit hard by nature this year," he said. "Fortunately, our entire Congressional delegation, especially Senate Agriculture Appropriations Chair Thad Cochran, understands the situation and I believe help is on the way."

The bill, which is now before the Senate, would give farmers in the U.S. a total of \$3.9 billion in emergency disaster and income loss payments. Items of interest to the Mississippi agriculture community include:

\$1.65 billion in Market Loss Payments: This would be an additional AMTA (Agriculture Transitional Market Assistance) payment as defined by the "Freedom to Farm" Bill of 1996.

\$1.5 billion in one-time payments to a person for crop losses: This money is earmarked for farmers who have suffered losses in row crops such as corn and soybeans. It could possibly also be earmarked to people who raise poultry and pine seedlings, both of which were also hit hard by drought this year.

\$75 million in emergency livestock feed assistance: This money would assist Mississippi cattlemen who suffered significant losses due to feed problems caused by the drought.